

I Claim:

- 1           1. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer, said guide comprising:  
2               a flexible position member including a first end, a second end, and an alignment  
3               mark near said second end;  
4               a body adapted to slidably engage said position member such that said first end of  
5               said position member extends horizontally from said body, and said second end  
6               of said position member extends vertically from said body; and  
7               a mount for coupling said body to said trailer; and  
8               whereby, when said tow vehicle approaches said trailer said tow vehicle pushes said  
9               flexible position member through said body such that the height of said  
10              alignment mark is indicative of the distance between said tow vehicle and said  
11              trailer.
  
- 1           2. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2              position member comprises a flexible steel tape.
  
- 1           3. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein the  
2              position of said alignment mark is adjustable.
  
- 1           4. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 3, wherein said  
2              alignment mark comprises a movable sticker.
  
- 1           5. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2              body further includes a vertical support adapted to support a generally vertical section of said  
3              position member.
  
- 1           6. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 5, wherein said  
2              vertical support includes at least one position member retainer.

1           7. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 5, wherein said  
2 vertical support includes a target mark such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said  
3 target mark is indicative of proper alignment of said tow vehicle with said trailer.

1           8. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2 body further includes a horizontal support adapted to support a generally horizontal section of  
3 said position member.

1           9. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 8, wherein:  
2 said body includes a vertical support adapted to support a vertical section of said position  
3 member; and  
4 wherein at least one of said vertical support and said horizontal support is collapsible.

1           10. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, further  
2 comprising a target mark adapted for placement on one of said tow vehicle, said trailer, or said  
3 guide, such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said target mark is indicative of  
4 proper alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1           11. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 10, wherein the  
2 position of said target mark is adjustable.

1           12. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 10, wherein said  
2 target mark is visible in a rear view mirror of said tow vehicle.

1           13. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2 guide further includes a visual sight adapted for mounting to said tow vehicle to facilitate lateral  
3 alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1           14. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 13, wherein said  
2 visual sight comprises a cover having a stripe thereon, said cover adapted for placement over a  
3 tailgate of said tow vehicle.

1           15. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 13, wherein said  
2 visual sight comprises a mark on said tow vehicle visible through a rear view mirror of said tow  
3 vehicle.

1           16. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 15, wherein said  
2 mark comprises a sticker placed on said rear view mirror.

1           17. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 15, wherein said  
2 mark comprises a sticker placed on a rear window of said tow vehicle.

1           18. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2 mount comprises:  
3               a first portion for engaging said trailer; and  
4               a second portion adapted to detachably engage said body of said guide.

1           19. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 18, wherein said  
2 first portion of said mount comprises a clamp.

1           20. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 19, wherein said  
2 second portion comprises a vertical member adapted to slidably engage a portion of said body.

1           21. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein a  
2 portion of said body and a complementary portion of said vertical member of said mount are  
3 dovetailed to facilitate slidable engagement of said vertical member and said body.

1           22. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein at  
2           least a portion of said vertical member is slotted to receive a portion of said body.

1           23. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 20, wherein the  
2           bottom distal end of said vertical member includes a position stop to vertically position said  
3           guide when said body and said vertical member are engaged.

1           24. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, further  
2           comprising a removable base, said removable base adapted to magnetically engage said trailer,  
3           and to facilitate the attachment of said mount thereto.

1           25. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2           position member is disposed so as to engage a flat portion of said tow vehicle.

1           26. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein one  
2           portion of said position member is disposed over said receiver.

1           27. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2           guide further comprises:  
3                   a visual sight adapted to engage said tow vehicle and to a laterally align said tow  
4                   vehicle and said trailer; and  
5                   a target mark such that the alignment of said alignment mark with said target mark is  
6                   indicative of proper alignment of said tow vehicle and said trailer; and  
7                   wherein said visual sight and said target mark comprise the same mark.

1           28. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide, said method  
2 comprising:  
3           fitting said trailer with said guide, said guide including a flexible position member  
4           having a first end and a second end, and a body adapted to slidably engage said  
5           position member such that said first end of said position member extends  
6           horizontally from said body and said second end of said position member extends  
7           vertically from said body;  
8           extending said first end of said flexible position member toward said tow vehicle;  
9           backing said tow vehicle toward said trailer to engage said first end of said position  
10          member with said tow vehicle; and  
11          pushing said position member through said guide until said second end of said  
12          position member reaches a predetermined height.

1           29. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 28, wherein said step of fitting said trailer with said guide includes detachably mounting said  
3 guide to said trailer.

1           30. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 29, wherein said step of detachably mounting said guide includes sliding a portion of said guide  
3 over a complementary mount fixed to said trailer.

1           31. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 29, wherein said step of detachably mounting said guide to said trailer includes magnetically  
3 coupling a removable base to said trailer.

1           32. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 28, wherein:  
3           said position member includes an alignment mark disposed near said second end; and  
4           said step of pushing said position member further includes pushing said position member  
5           through said guide until said alignment mark reaches a predetermined height.

1           33. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 32, wherein:

3           one of said guide, said tow vehicle, and said trailer includes a target mark; and  
4           said step of pushing said position member further includes pushing said position member  
5           through said guide with said tow vehicle until said alignment mark is aligned with said  
6           target mark.

1           34. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 28, wherein:

3           said tow vehicle includes a visual sight; and  
4           said method of aligning said tow vehicle with said trailer further includes the step of  
5           laterally aligning said tow vehicle with said trailer by laterally aligning said visual  
6           sight with a portion of said guide.

1           35. A method for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer using a guide according to Claim  
2 28, further comprising a step of initially calibrating said guide, said step of initially calibrating  
3 said guide comprising:

4           aligning said tow vehicle and said trailer;  
5           attaching said guide to said trailer;  
6           extending said first end of said position member toward said tow vehicle until it  
7           contacts said tow vehicle; and  
8           recording the vertical position of said second end of said position member as said  
9           predetermined height.

1           36. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer, said guide comprising:  
2           position indicating means including a first end, a second end, and an alignment mark  
3           near said second end; and  
4           a body adapted to mount said position indicating means to said trailer; and  
5           whereby when said tow vehicle approaches said trailer said tow vehicle pushes said  
6           position indicating means such that the height of said alignment mark is indicative  
7           of the distance between said tow vehicle and said trailer.

1           37. A guide for aligning a tow vehicle with a trailer according to Claim 36, further  
2           comprising means for detachably mounting said guide to said tow vehicle.